A Historic Critique of the Papacy

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Preface

Roman Catholic theologians often argue that the early Christian church affirmed the Roman Catholic system of the papacy. A few years back I got a heavy urge to study the topic and pick up some books from the early Christians. In my study, I came to the conclusion that the doctrine of the papacy is impossible to defend from the early Christian writings, and in fact we find the exact opposite. This short ebook will go through Christian history from the earliest times to show that the early Christian church did not teach papal supremacy.

I additionally attempt to refute objections to the claims used in this ebook, and explain some of the texts used to support the papacy. There are two conclusions I reached while reading the early Christians, the first being that there was no episcopal polity until the 2nd century, thus churches were autonomous and did not have a centralized hierarchy, being lead by multiple elders. Secondly, when the episcopacy does appear, there seems to be a kind of "primacy" of the bishop of Rome fast, but without having supremacy or infallibility. By the

word "primacy", I do not mean that the bishop of Rome had ultimate power, but that Rome was "first among equals". The words "first among equals" refers to someone with equal rights with others, but unofficially having the highest honor. This may be compared to the role of the Archbishop of Catebury in Anglicanism and the Patriarch of Constantinople Orthodoxy.

I quote many authors in this book, however I do not often agree with their theology, and I do endorse their general theology.

Biblical quotations are taken from the New International Version unless otherwise noted.

The New Testament

We do not see the papacy being taught in the New Testament, in fact there are many things that suggest against it. We see that Peter in his own letters admits to being equal with other elders, stating *"To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder and a witness of Christ's sufferings who also will share in the glory to be revealed:"1 Peter 5:1*

It is also notable that Peter used the Greek word "presbyteros", meaning "presbyter", this is notable because the Roman Catholic *episcopal polity*. Roman Catholicism separates the roles of priest/presbyter with bishop/overseer, the bishop being above the priest. The pope is seen as the bishop of Rome, however Peter identifies himself as a

"presbyter". Peter also clearly sees himself as equal to the other elders in office, if we expected a kind papal office, we should see Peter use phrases such as "I appeal to you as the universal pontiff", which we do not see.

Another major point from the New Testament is from the book of Acts, more specifically Acts 15. In Acts 15, we read about the Jerusalem council, in which the question of the Mosaic law is brought up. The apostles gather together to make a decision on the topic, however there are two interesting things to note, firstly we read in verse 6: *"The apostles and elders met to consider this question"*, Luke uses the word "elder" instead of "bishop", this seems to be an indication that these two words were seen as synonymous in the early church, which suggests that the Roman Catholic episcopal polity is not apostolic. However, the more major thing to note is that the ultimate decision was made by James, not Peter, we read in the book thus:

> *When they finished, James spoke up. "Brothers," he said, "listen to me. Simon has described to us how God first intervened to choose a people for his name from the Gentiles. The words of the prophets are in agreement with this, as it is written:*
>
> *"'After this I will return*
>
> *and rebuild David's fallen tent.*
>
> *Its ruins I will rebuild,*
>
> *and I will restore it,*

that the rest of mankind may seek the Lord,

even all the Gentiles who bear my name,

says the Lord, who does these things' —

things known from long ago.

"It is my judgment, therefore, that we should not make it difficult for the Gentiles who are turning to God. Instead we should write to them, telling them to abstain from food polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from the meat of strangled animals and from blood. For the law of Moses has been preached in every city from the earliest times and is read in the synagogues on every Sabbath."

The problem for the Roman Catholic is that it was not Peter who made the decision, which we should expect if he was the pope.

However, a Roman Catholic will quote *Matthew 16:18* which says: *"And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it."* to establish the papacy, however if we examine the words Jesus used more carefully, it is unlikely that Jesus was referring to Peter in his person. It is evident that there is a connection between the "rock" and "Peter", however this should be interpreted as the confession of Peter, as just before Jesus replied to Peter that he will build his church on the rock, Peter had said:
Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God."

Thus the church is built on the confession that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of the living God. We see this in the words of Jesus himself, as when addressing Peter he used the word "you", but suddenly switches to using the word "this", when talking about the "rock". This change of terms implies a change of the thing referenced. By using the word "this", Jesus is pointing to the confession of Peter.

This view was also recognized early on, authors such as John Chrysostom saw the rock to be Peter's confession, however this will be addressed later.

Already being mention a few times is the fact that there is no evidence of an episcopal polity in the bible, which is a necessary feature of the papal system. The episcopal system holds that there are three offices in the church: deacon, presbyter and bishop. However, both those who hold to a congregational polity (Baptists, Anabaptists and most Evangelicals) along with Reformed churches hold that the words "bishop/overseer" and "presbyter" are two names for one office in the bible.

The bible abundantly clearly does not distinguish the terms “bishop” and “presbyter” as separate offices, seeing them as synonymous. Examples of such can be found in the following verses (KJV):

Philippians 1:1

Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons:

Titus 1:5-7

For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee: If any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly. For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; not selfwilled, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre;

Additionally, the qualification lists for presbyters and bishops in the epistles to Timothy and Titus are identical, suggesting the terms being synonyms:

(Titus)

The reason I left you in Crete was that you might put in order what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every town, as I directed you. An elder must be blameless, faithful to his wife, a man whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient. Since an overseer manages God's household, he must be blameless—not overbearing, not quick-tempered, not given to drunkenness, not violent, not pursuing dishonest gain. 8 Rather, he must be hospitable, one who loves what is good, who is self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined. 9 He must hold firmly to the trustworthy

message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it.

(Timothy)

Here is a trustworthy saying: Whoever aspires to be an overseer desires a noble task. 2 Now the overseer is to be above reproach, faithful to his wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, 3 not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. 4 He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him, and he must do so in a manner worthy of full[a] respect. 5 (If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church?) 6 He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil. 7 He must also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil's trap.

The Keys

Roman Catholics who argue for the papacy often reference Matthew 16:19, which reads: *"And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."*, however the problem for the Catholic is that the bible in Matthew 18:19 references every apostle having the ability to bind and loose:
"Verily I say unto you (σοι, second person plural),
Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven:

and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”.

This thus means that the power to "bind and loose" was given to every apostle, not just Peter.

A second text Catholics use as a proof for the papacy is Isaiah 22:22, which reads: *“I will place on his shoulder the key to the house of David; what he opens no one can shut, and what he shuts no one can open.”.* The Catholic argues that this shows that the papacy was foretold by Isaiah, however it has its true fulfillment in Jesus, as Revelation 3:7 states: *“To the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: These are the words of him who is holy and true, who holds the key of David. What he opens no one can shut, and what he shuts no one can open. ;*”. It is thus an interpretive mistake to apply Isaiah 22 to anything else but Jesus, as it is clearly attributed to Him by John.

The earliest Christians also did not take these verses as supporting the papacy, interestingly multiple early Christians understood the keys as referring to the ability to understand the scriptures.

His kingdom is called the key of David, for it is the symbol of authority. The key is also the Holy Spirit, (the key) of both the book of Psalms and every prophecy, through which the treasures of knowledge are opened. On the one hand, he receives the first according to his humanity, and on the other hand he possesses the second according to the beginninglessness of his divinity. Since in some manuscripts

instead of David, Hades is written, (this would mean that) through the key of Hades, the authority over life and death has been confirmed in Christ. He is holy and true, as absolute Holiness and self-existent Truth.

Andrew of Caesarea AD 563–614 Commentary on the Apocalypse

For every written work needs the Reason (Logos) which closed it to open it. 'He shall shut and none shall open,' and when he opens no one can cast doubt on the interpretation he brings. Hence it is said that 'He shall open and no man shall shut

Origen 185-253 Commentary on John

John says in the Apocalypse: 'he who has the key of David, he who opens and no one shuts, and who shuts and no one opens.' This is the key held in the Law by the scribes and Pharisees who the Lord warns in the Gospel: 'Woe to you lawyers! who hold the key of the kingdom of heaven'. O you Pharisees, who hold the keys to the kingdom and do not believe in Christ who is the gate of the kingdom and the door, to you, indeed, the promise is made, but to us it is granted."

Jerome (342-420), Homily 66

Early Christian Writers

Clement of Rome 1st century

Clement of Rome wrote a letter to the Corinthians to fix their issues. Roman Catholics often use him as proof of papal

supremacy, however a closer examination shows that this letter disproves Catholic claims of the papacy:

1. Clement wrote in the name of the whole Church of Rome and not in his own name, implying that he did not see himself as serving a special role: *"The church of God which sojourns at Rome, to the church of God sojourning at Corinth, to them that are called and sanctified by the will of God, through our Lord Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, from Almighty God through Jesus Christ, be multiplied."*

2. Clement implies that there was no episcopal system yet, mentioning the existence of only two offices, which implies that he saw the words "bishop" and "presbyter" as synonyms: *"having first proved them by the Spirit, to be bishops and deacons of those who should afterwards believe"*

3. Clement never wrote his name in the entire letter, which is odd if he knew the Church saw him as the supreme. Assuming that Clement was aware of his universal jurisdiction, he certainly would have put his name on the letter as a powerful tool to get his point across.

4. There are multiple examples of early Christians giving instructions to other churches, without being from Rome, Polycarp also gave instructions to Philippi, Ignatius wrote to multiple Churches to avoid certain heresies. This does not mean that they claimed supreme authority.

Polycarp 2nd century

Polycarp implies that there was no monoepiscopacy at Philippi saying: *"Wherefore, it is needful to abstain from all these things, being subject to the presbyters and deacons, as unto God and Christ".* Again, we see a general consistent pattern, where early Christians would only mention two offices, not three. Polycarp thus also suggests that Philippi did not use an episcopal system. Though we know from Ignatius of Antioch that the system did exist in some churches when this letter was written, it had not yet come to Philippi, implying that a change happened somewhere in the 2nd century, where the episcopal polity gradually began to be used more. This is a problem to the Catholic view as without an episcopal system the papacy cannot exist.

Hermas 2nd century

Hermas has an interesting statement concerning the Roman church that is at odds with the modern papacy. Hermas wrote that the Roman church was led by the presbyters (=priests). Now this is interesting because it implies that there was no bishop (as distinct from a presbyter) in Rome yet, additionally Hermas fails to mention the universal authority of Rome:

"Thou shalt therefore write two little books, and shalt send one to Clement, and one to Grapte. So Clement shall send to the foreign cities, for this is his duty; while Grapte shall instruct the widows and the orphans. But thou shalt read (the book) to this city along with the elders that preside over the Church."

Note how he says that the elders (plural) preside over the church of Rome, not that the bishop presides over the church.

In other places, when Hermas talks about the offices of the churches, it consistently omits a distinction of presbyter and bishop, always mentioning two offices, which implies that they were seen as synonymous. Hermas thus implies that there was no episcopal system in Rome yet:

"Hear now concerning the stones that go to the building The stones that are squared and white, and that fit together in their joints, these are the apostles and bishops and teachers and deacons, who walked after the holiness of God, and exercised their office of bishop and teacher and deacon in purity and sanctity for the elect of God, some of them already fallen on sleep, and others still living. And because they always agreed with one another, they both had peace among themselves and listened one to another. Therefore their joinings fit together in the building of the tower."

Hermas here fails to mention presbyters, which implies he didn't see them as separate offices but synonymous with the word "bishop".

It is also possible that Hermas alludes to Matthew 16, seeing the rock as Jesus: *"First of all, Sir," say I, "explain this to me. The rock and the gate, what is it?" "This rock," saith he, "and gate is the Son of God." "How, Sir," say I, "is the rock ancient, but the gate recent?" "Listen," saith he, "and understand, foolish man."*

However, it is questionable if Hermas was alluding to Matthew 16.

Didache 1st century

The Didache implies that it saw the words "bishop" and "presbyter" as synonyms, since it only mentioned two offices *"Therefore, appoint for yourselves bishops and deacons worthy of the Lord, men meek, and not lovers of money". (Chapter 15)*

Ignatius of Antioch 2nd century

Ignatius is cited by Roman apologists as supporting the episcopal polity, while true, Ignatius also implies that this wasn't a universal practice. This is seen in his letter to the Romans, where he fails to mention the existence of any bishop in the letter, even though he mentions the bishop in every single other letter of his. Though arguments from silence can never be pushed far, it seems highly unlikely that someone as important as the pope would be left unmentioned by Ignatius, especially not even greeting him.

Roman Catholics object that he wasn't mentioned by Ignatius to avoid persecution, however Ignatius could easily have left his name unmentioned and simply say such as "most holy one", additionally Ignatius mentioned other bishops by name, who were equally in danger of persecution.

However, the Roman Catholic may object that Ignatius wrote in the epistle to the Romans: *"which also presides in the place of the region of the Romans"*, this is then viewed as an

affirmation of Rome being a leader of the church, however the most natural reading of the text means that Rome presides over the region of Rome, meaning regional authority in the city of Rome, note how Ignatius says "in the place of the region of the Romans". The word "in" is naturally to be taken as where the influence of the church was situated in, thus Ignatius is saying that Rome presides over the region of Rome.

Thus, Ignatius isn't saying "the church that presides over all in Rome" but can be paraphrased to have said "the church that presides regionally in Rome".

Polycrates of Ephesus 2nd century

Polycrates wrote a letter against the bishop of Rome during the Quartodeciman controversy. Quartodecimanism was the belief that Easter must be kept at the same time as Moses commanded to keep the Passover, this later evolved into a massive controversy, where the Roman Bishop called the Quartodecimans heretical, however it must be noted that the Quartodecimans did not hold to keeping the Passover like the Jews did, they merely celebrated the resurrection at the same time as Passover happened. Polycrates wrote a letter in the name of the entire eastern church against the pope, attempting to refute him:

"Moreover I also, Polycrates, who am the least of you all, in accordance with the tradition of my relatives, some of whom I have succeeded-seven of my relatives were bishops, and I am the eighth, and my relatives always observed the day when the

people put away the leaven-I myself, brethren, I say, who am sixty-five years old in the Lord, and have fallen in with the brethren in all parts of the world, and have read through all Holy Scripture, am not frightened at the things which are said to terrify us. For those who are greater than I have said, "We ought to obey God rather than men."”

Polycrates clearly attacked the bishop of Rome when he wanted to declare the Quartodecimans as heretical, saying “we ought to obey God rather than men”. This shows also that Polycrates may have edged towards the doctrine of sola scriptura, although not strictly (as there is no biblical references to keeping Easter at Nisan 14).

Catholics assert that Polycrates was a simple schismatic, and thus his testimony is not worthy to think about, however this is easily answered by the following facts:

1. Polycrates wrote in the name of the eastern churches in total.

2. Polycrates in another place of the letter cited people such as Melito and Polycarp as support for himself. Polycrates lived close to them and if they taught the supremacy of the bishop of Rome, why didn’t he see a contradiction in citing them for his position?

3. Irenaeus instead of siding with the pope against the “schismatic” Polycrates, he rebuked the pope:

Thereupon Victor, who presided over the church at Rome, immediately attempted to cut off from the common unity the

parishes of all Asia, with the churches that agreed with them, as heterodox; and he wrote letters and declared all the brethren there wholly excommunicate. But this did not please all the bishops. And they besought him to consider the things of peace, and of neighborly unity and love. Words of theirs are extant, sharply rebuking Victor. Among them was Irenaeus, who, sending letters in the name of the brethren in Gaul over whom he presided, maintained that the mystery of the resurrection of the Lord should be observed only on the "Lord's day" namely Easter. He fittingly admonishes Victor that he should not cut off whole churches of God which observed the tradition of an ancient custom.

— Eusebius 1890, Book V Chapter 24

Irenaeus evidently did not see a contradiction in rebuking the pope for his actions.

Cyprian 3rd century

Cyprian is often cited as proof of Roman primacy, however there are clear indications from the writings of Cyprian himself that there is no such papal system yet in function.

As background information, we know that the Roman bishop and Cyprian went into a conflict over the issue of rebaptism, Cyprian advocating for rebaptism while the Roman bishop called it heretical.

We should note that during the schism with Stephen and Cyprian, Cyprian most clearly denied the authority of the Pope saying: *“For no one of us has set himself up to be*

bishop of bishops, or attempted with tyrannical dread to force his colleagues to obedience to him, since every bishop has, for the license of liberty and power, his own will, and as he cannot be judged by another, so neither can he judge another. But we await the judgment of our universal Lord, our Lord Jesus Christ, who one and alone has the power, both of advancing us in the governance of his Church, and of judging of our actions in that position." and *"For neither did Peter, whom first the Lord chose, and upon whom He built His Church, when Paul disputed with him afterwards about circumcision, claim anything to himself insolently, nor arrogantly assume anything; so as to say that he held the primacy, and that he ought rather to be obeyed by novices and those lately come. Nor did he despise Paul because he had previously been a persecutor of the Church."*

(Cyprian speaking in the council of Carthage and Epistle 70)

Now, there does indeed exist an attempted answer to these clear quotes, the Roman Catholics have attempted to answer that Cyprian changed his mind and affirmed the papacy in his early life and prior to his death. Catholic apologists quote later Christians saying that the North African churches decided to agree with Stephen, thus arguing that Cyprian submitted to the papacy. Although this might sound plausible, this is easily answered when we read the words of Augustine. Augustine stated that Cyprian would not have changed his mind unless a council would have been called, thus Augustine clearly implies (as such council didn't take place) that Cyprian did remain in his position: *"Wherefore the holy Cyprian, whose*

dignity is only increased by his humility, who so loved the pattern set by Peter as to use the words, "Giving us thereby a pattern of concord and patience, that we should not pertinaciously love our own opinions, but should rather account as our own any true and rightful suggestions of our brethren and colleagues, for the common health and good," — he, I say, abundantly shows that he was most willing to correct his own opinion, if any one should prove to him that it is as certain that the baptism of Christ can be given by those who have strayed from the fold, as that it could not be lost when they strayed; on which subject we have already said much. Nor should we ourselves venture to assert anything of the kind, were we not supported by the unanimous authority of the whole Church, to which he himself would unquestionably have yielded".

Here, Augustine admits that Cyprian did not change his mind on his position, and thus showing that Cyprian never accepted the position of Rome. This quote from Augustine also admits that the council has more authority than the bishop of Rome, because the testimony of the Pope, was not sufficient for a doctrinal statement. This also shows, that despite Cyprian opposing the Pope, Augustine believed that it was proper to call Cyprian "holy", Augustine never used this kind of language for people he saw as heretical.

Next, that Cyprian did not change his mind from his early life can be seen from his epistle number 24, which was made prior to the controversy with Stephen, where Cyprian asserts that every bishop is a successor of Peter, and they all together rule

over the Church: *"Our Lord, whose precepts and admonitions we ought to observe, describing the honour of a bishop and the order of His Church, speaks in the Gospel, and says to Peter: I say unto you, That you are Peter, and upon this rock will I build my Church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto you the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever you shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Thence, through the changes of times and successions, the ordering of bishops and the plan of the Church flow onwards; so that the Church is founded upon the bishops, and every act of the Church is controlled by these same rulers."*

This shows that for Cyprian, the Church is ruled by the bishops together and not by one bishop, and no one bishop alone shares in succession of Peter, thus being consistent with his later statements denying Petrine supremacy.

Now there indeed exists letters where Cyprian speaks highly of Rome, however he never ascribes infallibility nor supremacy to the bishop of Rome, instead being comparable to the position of the Patriarch of Constantinople in Eastern Orthodoxy, being a "first among equals". Cyprian clearly denied the existence of papal supremacy by stating: *"He gives an equal power, and says, As the Father has sent me, even so send I you: Receive the Holy Ghost: Whose soever sins you remit, they shall be remitted unto him; and whose soever sins you retain, they shall be retained; yet, that He might set forth unity, He arranged by His authority the origin of that unity, as*

beginning from one. Assuredly the rest of the apostles were also the same as was Peter, endowed with a like partnership both of honour and power; but the beginning proceeds from unity." (On the Unity of the Church.)

Cyprian consistently states that there exists no man who has ultimate and universal authority, and thus is a strong example of an early Christian who did not believe in any kind of papal system.

Philip Schaff pointed another interesting detail that implies Rome having regional jurisdiction. In epistle 49 the Christians at Rome refer to Cornelius as "our bishop", which implies they did not see Cornelius as having an exceptional relation to other churches: *"Maximus, Urbanus, Sidonius, and Macharius, to Cyprian their brother, greeting. We are certain, dearest brother, that you also rejoice together with us with equal earnestness, that we having taken advice, and especially, considering the interests and the peace of the Church, having passed by all other matters, and reserved them to God's judgment, have made peace with Cornelius our bishop, as well as with the whole clergy. You ought most certainly to know from these our letters that this was done with the joy of the whole Church, and even with the forward affection of the brethren. We pray, dearest brother, that for many years you may fare well."*

Philip Schaff commented thus: *"The language of this letter clearly demonstrates the primitive condition of the Roman clergy and their bishop, and their entire unconsciousness of*

any exceptional position in their estate or relations to other churches. "Our bishop"—not Urbis et Orbis papa."

Firmillian 3rd century

Firmillian was an eastern Bishop living at the same time as Cyprian, we only have one writing left from Firmillian, however this writing is entirely devoted to attacking the bishop of Rome.

Firmillian joined Cyprian during his conflict with the Roman bishop, stating: *"But that they who are at Rome do not observe those things in all cases which are handed down from the beginning, and vainly pretend the authority of the apostles; any one may know also from the fact, that concerning the celebration of Easter, and concerning many other sacraments of divine matters, he may see that there are some diversities among them, and that all things are not observed among them alike, which are observed at Jerusalem, just as in very many other provinces also many things are varied because of the difference of the places and names. And yet on this account there is no departure at all from the peace and unity of the Catholic Church, such as Stephen has now dared to make; breaking the peace against you, which his predecessors have always kept with you in mutual love and honour, even herein defaming Peter and Paul the blessed apostles, as if the very men delivered this who in their epistles execrated heretics, and warned us to avoid them. Whence it appears that this tradition is of men which maintains heretics,*

and asserts that they have baptism, which belongs to the Church alone."

Firmillian went so far as to call Stephen like a new Judas:

Except that we may in this matter give thanks to Stephen, that it has now happened through his unkindness that we receive the proof of your faith and wisdom. But although we have received the favour of this benefit on account of Stephen, certainly Stephen has not done anything deserving of kindness and thanks. For neither can Judas be thought worthy by his perfidy and treachery wherewith he wickedly dealt concerning the Saviour, as though he had been the cause of such great advantages, that through him the world and the people of the Gentiles were delivered by the Lord's passion.

Roman Catholics object that Firmillian was merely a schismatic and his opinion doesn't matter, additionally they object that Firmillian shows that Stephen did claim papal power, however there are no indications that Stephen claimed universal jurisdiction, nor that he claimed infallibility. Although Stephen does seem to claim that he has the ability to know all true doctrine.

Firstly, Firmillian states that Stephen's claim was a complete novelty, not taught by previous popes, saying: *"Rome do not observe those things in all cases which are handed down from the beginning"*, secondly Stephen likely claimed a very high level of primacy, but not universal jurisdiction, Stephen clearly claimed some kind of doctrinal authority, but there was no discussion of jurisdiction, there are no indications Stephen

believed he had rights to the jurisdiction of anything else than his local area. Additionally, bishops in the east even after Firmillian had died, praised him as a saint, Malchion stated concerning him *"and exhorted them to give their help in relieving us from this deadly doctrine; among these, we addressed, for instance, Dionysius, the bishop of Alexandria, and Firmilian of Cappadocia, those men of blessed name."* For Malchion to praise a heretic who opposed the system Christ supposedly set up is highly inconsistent. The letter of Malchion was also written in the name of the entire Synod of Antioch and none ever attacked Malchion for supporting a heretic, thus the early Church did not view Firmillian as a schismatic despite attacking pope Stephen.

More evidence that churches did not believe in Stephen's claims comes from Dionysius of Alexandria, who wrote to Stephen saying that he can merely instruct other bishops, but in the end they choose what they do and give account to God: *"how to supervise those who are within,—we give instructions to the local primates who under divine imposition of hands were appointed to discharge these duties ; for they shall give a summary account to the Lord of whatsoever they do."(Of the blessed Dionysius, bishop of Alexandria, from the letter to Stephanus, bishop of Rome.)*

This shows that Dionysius believed that Stephen can merely give "instruction" but cannot directly intervene. This letter is important, as Dionysius in fact agreed with Stephen on his view of Baptism and disagreed with Cyprian, yet still wrote against Stephen's radical reactions to Cyprian.

Tertullian 2nd century

Tertullian “on modesty” is relevant to the papacy debate. Tertullian calls a bishop “pontifex maximus”, clearly ironically, as he disagreed with him. *Pontifex maximus* was the name of the pagan high priest during the day of Tertullian, which he applied to this bishop. Now why am I using ambiguous language? Scholars disagree on if Tertullian wrote against the Pope or Agrippinus the bishop of Carthage. However what is significant is Tertullian’s view of *Matthew 16*, on which he commented: *“If, because the Lord has said to Peter, Upon this rock will I build My Church, to you have I given the keys of the heavenly kingdom; or, Whatsoever you shall have bound or loosed in earth, shall be bound or loosed in the heavens, you therefore presume that the power of binding and loosing has derived to you, that is, to every Church akin to Peter, what sort of man are you, subverting and wholly changing the manifest intention of the Lord, conferring (as that intention did) this (gift) personally upon Peter? On you, He says, will I build My Church; and, I will give to you the keys, not to the Church; and, Whatsoever you shall have loosed or bound, not what they shall have loosed or bound. For so withal the result teaches. In (Peter) himself the Church was reared; that is, through (Peter) himself; (Peter) himself essayed the key; you see what (key): Men of Israel, let what I say sink into your ears: Jesus the Nazarene, a man destined by God for you, and so forth. (Peter) himself, therefore, was the first to unbar, in Christ's baptism, the entrance to the heavenly kingdom, in which (kingdom) are*

loosed the sins that were beforetime bound; and those which have not been loosed are bound, in accordance with true salvation; and Ananias he bound with the bond of death, and the weak in his feet he absolved from his defect of health. Moreover, in that dispute about the observance or non-observance of the Law, Peter was the first of all to be endued with the Spirit, and, after making preface touching the calling of the nations, to say, And now why are you tempting the Lord, concerning the imposition upon the brethren of a yoke which neither we nor our fathers were able to support? But however, through the grace of Jesus we believe that we shall be saved in the same way as they. This sentence both loosed those parts of the law which were abandoned, and bound those which were reserved. Hence the power of loosing and of binding committed to Peter had nothing to do with the capital sins of believers; and if the Lord had given him a precept that he must grant pardon to a brother sinning against him even seventy times sevenfold, of course He would have commanded him to bind— that is, to retain — nothing subsequently, unless perchance such (sins) as one may have committed against the Lord, not against a brother. For the forgiveness of (sins) committed in the case of a man is a prejudgment against the remission of sins against God." On Modesty (Tertullian)

Roman Catholics assert that this is clear proof that the pope claimed authority over the whole Church, however this is a highly faulty reading. The one Tertullian argued against didn't say that this verse means "I have doctrinal authority", but He

was referring to the power of forgiving the lapsed (those who lapsed from the faith) by letting them back to the Church. However, if Tertullian was addressing it against the pope, it would mean that he denied his authority to let the lapsed back into the church.

Origen 2nd century

Origen's view of Matthew 16 directly excludes the possibility of the papacy, saying that every disciple of Jesus is his successor:

"And perhaps that which Simon Peter answered and said, You are the Christ, the Son of the living God, Matthew 16:16 if we say it as Peter, not by flesh and blood revealing it unto us, but by the light from the Father in heaven shining in our heart, we too become as Peter, being pronounced blessed as he was, because that the grounds on which he was pronounced blessed apply also to us, by reason of the fact that flesh and blood have not revealed to us with regard to Jesus that He is Christ, the Son of the living God, but the Father in heaven, from the very heavens, that our citizenship may be in heaven, Philippians 3:20 revealing to us the revelation which carries up to heaven those who take away every veil from the heart, and receive the spirit of the wisdom and revelation of God. Ephesians 1:17 And if we too have said like Peter, You are the Christ, the Son of the living God, not as if flesh and blood had revealed it unto us, but by light from the Father in heaven having shone in our heart, we become a Peter, and to us there might be said by the Word, You are Peter, etc.

Matthew 16:18 For a rock is every disciple of Christ of whom those drank who drank of the spiritual rock which followed them, 1 Corinthians 10:4 and upon every such rock is built every word of the church, and the polity in accordance with it; for in each of the perfect, who have the combination of words and deeds and thoughts which fill up the blessedness, is the church built by God."

Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew

Origen's view of Matthew 16 cannot co-exist with modern papal claims, now it may be objected that Origen was a heretic, while it is true that Origen was condemned by later councils, none of them mentioned his view of Peter as offensive.

Also as noted before, Origen denied the Roman Catholic interpretation of the "key of David":

Origen 185-253 Commentary on John

John says in the Apocalypse: 'he who has the key of David, he who opens and no one shuts, and who shuts and no one opens.' This is the key held in the Law by the scribes and Pharisees who the Lord warns in the Gospel: 'Woe to you lawyers! who hold the key of the kingdom of heaven'. O you Pharisees, who hold the keys to the kingdom and do not believe in Christ who is the gate of the kingdom and the door, to you, indeed, the promise is made, but to us it is granted."

Basil of Caesarea 4th century

Basil in the 4th century came into conflict with the pope of his time due to the Melatian schism.

As Basil was opposed by the pope, he received a letter from him, however instead of submitting to him, Basil just declares that he will not submit to mere men.

”and therefore I congratulate those who have received the letter from Rome. And, although it is a grand testimony in their favour, I only hope it is true and confirmed by facts. But I shall never be able to persuade myself on these grounds to ignore Meletius, or to forget the Church which is under him, or to treat as small, and of little importance to the true religion, the questions which originated the division. I shall never consent to give in, merely because somebody is very much elated at receiving a letter from men. Even if it had come down from heaven itself, but he does not agree with the sound doctrine of the faith, I cannot look upon him as in communion with the saints.” Letter 214

Basil here most clearly denied papal supremacy, saying that he is a mere man without a special place.

As with other cases, we can see no council or a massive churchwide reaction against Basil, in fact we know that Basil was praised by later authors, as even the Catholic Encyclopedia reads:

Writing about the year 520 to the African bishops in exile in Sardinia, Peter, an Oriental, mentions a Liturgy of St. Basil, which was known and used throughout the entire East, and

even quotes a passage from it: "Hence, also, Blessed Basil, Bishop of Cæsaria, in a prayer of the holy altar, with which almost the entire East is familiar, says among other things: Grant us, O Lord, Thy strength and protection; make the evil good and preserve the just in their righteousness. For Thou canst do all things and there is no one who may oppose Thee; for when Thou desirest, Thou savest, and no one resists Thy will." (P.L., LXV, 449.)

Jerome 4-5th centuries

Jerome plays a role in this question, as Jerome stated that the episcopal system was a later development:

The presbyter is the same as the bishop, and before parties had been raised up in religion by the provocations of Satan, the churches were governed by the Senate of the presbyters. But as each one sought to appropriate to himself those whom he had baptized, instead of leading them to Christ, it was appointed that one of the presbyters, elected by his colleagues, should be set over all the others, and have chief supervision over the general well-being of the community. . . Without doubt it is the duty of the presbyters to bear in mind that by the discipline of the Church they are subordinated to him who has been given them as their head, but it is fitting that the bishops, on their side, do not forget that if they are set over the presbyters, it is the result of tradition, and not by the fact of a particular institution by the Lord. —Jerome, Commentary on Titus 1:7

Jerome also said that all apostles had equal authority (though still affirming Peter as a first among equals). Jerome rebuked Jovinian for saying that the church was build upon Peter alone: *"But you say, the Church was founded upon Peter: although elsewhere the same is attributed to all the Apostles, and they all receive the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and the strength of the Church depends upon them all alike, yet one among the twelve is chosen so that when a head has been appointed, there may be no occasion for schism. But why was not John chosen, who was a virgin?" Adversus Jovinianum*

Now, Jerome does assign primacy to Peter, but not supremacy. Jerome just said that they had technical equality in terms of jurisdiction, but Peter was first among them, thus being a first among equals.

Jovinian 4th century

As mentioned before, Jovinian held that the church is built on Peter alone. However, also know that Jovinian could not have either taught a papal system, he was seen as a heretic by the Roman bishop and conflicted with him often, most clearly showing that Jovinian did not care for his judgement.
Jovinian got into heavy conflict with the Roman bishop and most of the western church on the position of ascetism. The some in the western church had began to teach that virginity is a meritable good deed by itself, thus sexual relations even in marriage was seen as somewhat bad. The bishop of Rome who was Siricus was especially angry at Jovinian for holding

that marriage was not inferior to virginity and openly calling him a heretic.

Philip Schaff writes on him:

And he at first found extensive sympathy. But he was excommunicated and banished with his adherents at a council about the year 390, by Siricius, bishop of Rome, who was zealously opposed to the marriage of priests. He then betook himself to Milan, where the two monks Sarmatio and Barbatian held forth views like his own; but he was treated there after the same fashion by the bishop, Ambrose, who held a council against him. From this time he and his party disappear from history, and before the year 406 he died in exile.

Thus we can see that even though Jovinian held that the church was built upon Peter, there was no need to obey the Roman bishop.

Ambrosiaster 4th century

Ambrosiaster asserted that the episcopal system was a later development, stating in his commentary on Ephesians that presbyters and bishops were once the same thing, but eventually the system was changed.

Ambrosiaster in his commentary wrote:

> *The writings of the Apostle do not agree entirely with the hierarchy which is now in the Church, because they were*

written at the very beginning. He even calls Timothy, whom he himself made a presbyter, the bishop, because first presbyters were being called bishops because when a bishop passed away, a presbyter succeeded him. In Egypt, presbyters even do confirm if the bishop is absent. But because the presbyters who followed begun to be found unworthy to hold primacies, upon some reflection the rule was changed: a merit, not a rank, should made one a bishop by a judgement of many priests so that no one unworthy usurp daringly [the office] and scandalize many. (translation. M. Szada)

Augustine 4-5th centuries

Augustine stated that the rock mentioned in Matthew 16 likely refers to Jesus instead of Peter, but said that the view one takes of this passage is not of high importance, which shows that he did not think that this passage was of high importance and thus undermining papal claims. Assuming that the modern papacy existed during the days of Augustine, there could not have been disagreement on this passage, however Augustine still declares:

But I know that very frequently at a later time, I so explained what the Lord said: 'Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church,' that it be understood as built upon Him whom Peter confessed saying: 'Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God,' and so Peter, called after this rock, represented the person of the Church which is built upon this

rock, and has received 'the keys of the kingdom of heaven.' For, 'Thou art Peter' and not 'Thou art the rock' was said to him. But 'the rock was Christ,' in confessing whom, as also the whole Church confesses, Simon was called Peter. But let the reader decide which of these two opinions is the more probable." (The Retractions)

Augustine also stated that scripture is above every single writing made later, which would include such written by a pope:

But who can fail to be aware that the sacred canon of Scripture, both of the Old and New Testament, is confined within its own limits, and that it stands so absolutely in a superior position to all later letters of the bishops, that about it we can hold no manner of doubt or disputation whether what is confessedly contained in it is right and true; (On Baptism)

Some object that Augustine said: *"Rome has spoken the cause is closed"*, although this is a common quote, it is not what Augustine said. Although I have many theological disagreements with James White, he makes a good explanation of Augustine's words, this is a quote from him, which can be found on aomin.org:

Even less excusable is the constant use of Augustine's comments in Sermon 131, quoted by Keating as "Rome has spoken; the case is closed." Keating puts these words in quotes, indicating that Augustine actually said this. He places it in the context of Papal Infallibility. It is clearly his intention

to communicate to his readers that Augustine 1) said these words, and 2) was speaking about the subject in his sermon. Nothing could be farther from the truth. Augustine never said what Keating quotes. In fact, here is the actual Latin text of the final section of Sermon 131 from Migne, PL 38:734:

It is a measure of the utter desperation of the Roman position to have to make reference to such things, in our opinion. The topic is not the bishop of Rome nor the authority of Rome. It is obvious, beyond question, that Augustine's point is that Pelagianism is a refuted error. It is not refuted because the bishop of Rome has refuted it. It is refuted because it is opposed to Scripture. Two councils have concluded this, and the bishop of Rome has agreed. From Augustine's position, the error has been exposed and refuted. If only those who are in error would come to know the truth! Augustine exhorts his hearers to teach the gainsayers, and pray that they may be dissuaded from their errors.

Photius 9th century

Photius in the 9th century came into conflict with the Roman bishop over jurisdiction of Bulgaria, writing the following words:

For the Bulgarians had not been baptised even two years when dishonourable men emerged out of the darkness (that is, the West), and poured down like hail or, better, charged like wild boars upon the newly-planted vineyard of the Lord, destroying it with hoof and tusk, which is to say, by their shameful lives and corrupted dogmas. For the papal

missionaries and clergy wanted these Orthodox Christians to depart from the correct and pure dogmas of our irreproachable Faith.

The first error of the Westerners was to compel the faithful to fast on Saturdays. (I mention this seemingly small point because the least departure from Tradition can lead to a scorning of every dogma of our Faith.) Next, they convinced the faithful to despise the marriage of priests, thereby sowing in their souls the seeds of the Manichean heresy. Likewise, they persuaded them that all who had been chrismated by priests had to be anointed again by bishops. In this way, they hoped to show that Chrismation by priests had no value, thereby ridiculing this divine and supernatural Christian Mystery. From whence comes this law forbidding priests to anoint with Holy Chrism? From what lawgiver, Apostle, Father, or Synod? For, if a priest cannot chrismate the newly-baptised, then surely neither can he baptise. Or, how can a priest consecrate the Body and Blood of Christ our Lord in the Divine Liturgy if, at the same time, he cannot chrismate with Holy Chrism? If this grace then, is taken from the priests, the episcopal rank is diminished, for the bishop stands at the head of the choir of priests. But the impious Westerners did not stop their lawlessness even here.

Now, concerning these forerunners of apostasy, common pests and servants of the enemy, we, by divine and synodal decree, condemn them as impostors and enemies of God. It is not as though we were just now pronouncing judgement upon them, but rather, we now declare openly the condemnation ordained

by the ancient synods and Apostolic Canons. If they stubbornly persist in their error, we will exclude them from the communion of all Christians. They introduced fasting on Saturdays, although that is prohibited by the 64th Apostolic Canon which states: If some cleric is found fasting on Sundays or Saturdays except the one Great Saturday before Pascha, let him be removed from the ranks of the clergy, and if he be a layman, let him be excommunicated. Similarly, by the 56th canon of the holy Fourth Ecumenical Synod which states: Since we have learnt that in the city of Old Rome some, during the Great Fast, in opposition to the ecclesiastical order handed down to us, keep the fast even on Saturdays, the holy Ecumenical Synod orders that in the Church of Old Rome the Apostolic Canon which prohibits fasting on Saturdays and Sundays is to be followed exactly.

Similarly, there is a canon of the regional synod of Gangra which anathematises those who do not recognise married priests. This was confirmed by the holy Sixth Ecumenical Synod, which condemned those who require that priests and deacons cease to cohabit with their lawful wives after their ordination. Such a custom was being introduced even then by the Church of Old Rome. That Synod reminded the Church of Old Rome of the evangelical teaching and of the canon and polity of the Apostles, and ordered it not to insult the holy institution of Christian marriage established by God Himself.

From the Italian region, we have received a synodal letter citing many grave matters against the bishop of Old Rome. Accordingly, the Orthodox there ask us to free them from his

great tyranny, for in that area sacred law is being scorned and Church order trampled. We were told this earlier by monks who came to us from there, and now we have received many letters stating frightening news about that region and asking us to relay their message to all the bishops and to the Apostolic Patriarchs as well. For that reason, I communicate to you their request by way of this epistle. Once a holy and ecumenical Christian synod has been assembled, it will fall upon us together to resolve all these matters with the help of God and according to the rules of previous Synods, that in so doing, a deep peace may again prevail in the Church of Christ.

Encyclical Letter of Saint Photius (867)

Photius most clearly denies the authority of the pope and calling him a heretic, this shows that eastern Bishops did not accept papal authority even so late as the 9th century. Photius also cites Sicilian bishops for his position, which also shows that the bishop of Rome was even opposed by them.

From these writings we can see that the eastern churches never held the pope to have universal jurisdiction, although by the 9th century it appears that the Roman bishop had power over the west already.

Pseudo-Dionysius 5-6th centuries

Pseudo-Dionysius stated that each bishop (hierarch) is a successor of Peter, he thus didn't see Peter's succession as limited in one place but universally in every church: *"And to*

the one enlightened by the sacred revelation of the all-holy Father it is said in Scripture, 'whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.' Thus [Peter] himself and all the hierarchs like him have had the judgment of the Father revealed to them, and, being themselves men who provide revelation and explanation, they have the task of admitting the friends of God and of keeping away the ungodly"

Pseudo-Dionysius uses the term "hierarch" in his writings to refer to the bishops, thus he is saying that all bishops share in succession of Peter.

John Meyendorff explained his view thus:

"The early Christian concept, best expressed in the third century by Cyprian of Carthage, according to which the 'see of Peter' belongs, in each local church, to the bishop, remains the longstanding and obvious pattern for the Byzantines. Gregory of Nyssa, for example, can write that Jesus 'through Peter gave to the bishops the keys of heavenly honors.' Pseudo–Dionysius when he mentions the 'hierarchs'—i.e., the bishops of the early Church—refers immediately to the image of Peter....Peter succession is seen wherever the right faith is preserved, and, as such, it cannot be localized geographically or monopolized by a single church or individual (John Meyendorff, Byzantine Theology (New York: Fordham University, 1974), p. 98)."

Others

Multiple early Christians saw the rock of Matthew 16 as referring to the confession of Peter:

3. What then says Christ? You are Simon, the son of Jonas; you shall be called Cephas. Thus since you have proclaimed my Father, I too name him that begot you; all but saying, As you are son of Jonas, even so am I of my Father. Else it were superfluous to say, You are Son of Jonas; but since he had said, Son of God, to point out that He is so Son of God, as the other son of Jonas, of the same substance with Him that begot Him, therefore He added this, And I say unto you, You are Peter, and upon this rock will I build my Church; that is, on the faith of his confession

Homily 54 on Matthew John Chrysostom

Eusebius in his commentary on the psalms identifies Jesus as being the rock:

'Upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it'; and elsewhere: 'The rock, moreover, was Christ.' For, as the Apostle indicates with these words: 'No other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Christ Jesus.'

Pope Gregory the Great also implies that he denied having universal jurisdiction:

Now I confidently say that whosoever calls himself, or desires to be called, Universal Priest, is in his elation the precursor of antichrist, because he proudly puts himself above all others Book VII, Letter 33

This was written against the Patriarch of Constantinople, showing that the bishop of Constantinople saw it as okay to conflict with the pope. The previous letter was written against the bishop of Constantinople claiming to himself ultimate primacy.

John Calvin would often quoted Pope Gregory in his criticism of the papacy, as Gregory made many similar statements:
For Gregory thus speaks: "Peter was the chief member in the body, John, Andrew, and James, the heads of particular communities. All, however, are under one head members of the Church: nay, the saints before the law, the saints under the law, the saints under grace, all perfecting the body of the Lord, are constituted members: none of them ever wished to be styled universal" (Gregor. Lib. 4 Ep. 83). When the Pontiff arrogates to himself the power of ordering, he little accords with what Gregory elsewhere says. For Eulogius, Bishop of Alexandria, having said that he had received an order from him, he replies in this manner: "This word order I beg you to take out of my hearing, for I know who I am, and who you are: in station you are my brethren, in character my fathers. I therefore did not order, but took care to suggest what seemed useful" (Gregor. Lib. 7 Ep. 80). When the Pope extends his jurisdiction without limit, he does great and atrocious injustice not only to other bishops, but to each single church, tearing and dismembering them, that he may build his see upon their ruins. When he exempts himself from all tribunals, and wishes to reign in the manner of a tyrant, holding his own

caprice to be his only law, the thing is too insulting, and too foreign to ecclesiastical rule, to be on any account submitted to. It is altogether abhorrent, not only from pious feeling, but also from common sense.(John Calvin Institutes)

It should be also noted that, though Maximus the confessor had a very high view of Rome, he seems to have taught that Rome could fall into heresy, stating:

And they said, "And if the Romans should come to terms with them at this time, what will you do?" He replied, "The Holy Spirit, according to the Apostle, condemns even angels who sanction anything against what has been preached" [Maximus the Confessor, Selected Writings (Paulist Press, 1985), p 23].

Bede I the 8th century made the following statement which contradicts the Catholic view: *"Although it may seem that this power of loosing and binding was given by the Lord only to Peter, we must nevertheless know without any doubt that it was given to the other apostles" Homilies on the Gospel*s

Isidore of Seville also stated that Peter did not have ultimate supremacy: "*So Peter first received the power of binding and loosing, and he first led people to faith by the power of his preaching. Still, the other Apostles have been made equal with Peter in a fellowship of dignity and power. They also, having been sent out into all the world, preached the Gospel. Having descended from these apostles, the bishops have succeeded them, and through all the world they have been established in the seats of the apostles - De Ecclesiasticus"*

We also see Claudius of Turin (9th century) protesting the growing Roman power in his day:

We know, according to the Evangelist, that the words of the Lord savior were not understood, when he spoke to Peter, "You are Peter and upon this rock I will build my church and I will give you the keys of heaven." (Matthew 16:18-19) Because of these words spoken by the Lord, the race of ignorant men, having disregarded the understanding of all spiritual things, wish to go to Rome in order to acquire eternal life. He who understands the keys of the kingdom of heaven as given above does not require that the intercession of the blessed Peter be limited to one locale. If we subtly consider the proper meaning of the words of the Lord, it was not said by him, "Whatever you loose in heaven will be loosed on earth, and whatever you bind in heaven will be held bound on earth." From this it is known that the ministry is granted to the overseers of the church only as long as they are on pilgrimage in the mortal body. When they pay the debt of death, those who succeed them in their place obtain the same judicial power, as it is written, "Instead of your fathers, sons are born to you; you will make them princes over all the earth." (Psalms 45:16; 44:17 in the Vulgate) . . . Hear this, you who are fools among the people and you who were once silly and sought the intercession of the apostle by going to Rome (The Apology)

Ecumenical councils and local synods

Council of Nicaea (A.D. 325)

Many conspiracy theorists have argued that the papacy started from the Council of Nicaea, however it is the exact opposite. We see the Nicaean canons contradicting the papacy outright.

Canon 6 of Nicaea clearly contradicts papal claims, stating: "*Let the ancient customs in Egypt, Libya, and Pentapolis prevail: that the Bishop of Alexandria have jurisdiction in all these, since the like is customary for the Bishop of Rome also."*

This council states that Alexandria has local jurisdiction in Egypt, just as Rome has a similar custom (meaning local jurisdiction), this interpretation is further proven by the words of the 4th century theologian, Rufinus stating: *"The ancient custom in Alexandria and the city of Rome is to be maintained whereby [the bishop of the former] has charge of Egypt, while [the bishop of the latter] has charge of the suburbicarian [local] churches."*

Now, the Roman Catholic tries to argue against this, stating that: "since the like is customary for the Bishop of Rome also" should be translated as "since it is a Roman custom", arguing that the text should be paraphrased as "the Bishop of Alexandria have jurisdiction in all these, because it is Roman custom", meaning the jurisdiction that Alexandria has, was given by Rome.

However, this reading does not account for the use of the Greek word "kai" meaning "also". If we assume the Roman

Catholic interpretation to be correct, how does one account for the word "also" being used, does that mean that there is some other church which also has given jurisdiction to Alexandria together with Rome? This view doesn't make sense. Additionally, the Koine Greek word used is not "ethos" (meaning custom), but "sunethes", which means "customary, habitual, usual".

This re-interpretation of the grammar cannot function, and Rufinus' words testify that the Protestant views of the canon are correct.

First council of Constantinople (A.D. 381)

The first council of Constantinople clearly affirms that each church has local jurisdiction, stating: *"Canon 2: The bishops are not to go beyond their dioceses to churches lying outside of their bounds, nor bring confusion on the churches; but let the Bishop of Alexandria, according to the canons, alone administer the affairs of Egypt; and let the bishops of the East manage the East alone, the privileges of the Church in Antioch, which are mentioned in the canons of Nice, being preserved; and let the bishops of the Asian Diocese administer the Asian affairs only; and the Pontic bishops only Pontic matters; and the Thracian bishops only Thracian affairs. And let not bishops go beyond their dioceses for ordination or any other ecclesiastical ministrations, unless they be invited. And the aforesaid canon concerning dioceses being observed, it is evident that the synod of every province will administer the affairs of that particular province as was decreed at Nice. But*

the Churches of God in heathen nations must be governed according to the custom which has prevailed from the times of the Fathers."

Now Roman Catholics object that the council is simply silent, however this doesn't work, as the council never ascribes an exception for Rome.

Secondly, they object that a later canon of the council states "Because it is new Rome, the bishop of Constantinople is to enjoy the privileges of honour after the bishop of Rome."

This canon is now used as proof for Roman primacy, which technically true, however, it is a primacy of honor and not a primacy of jurisdiction.

Thus, the canon in fact, appears problematic to the Roman apologist, as Catholicism denies that Rome has a mere primacy of honour, in a similar manner as Constantinople has a primacy of honour in Eastern Orthodoxy.

Council of Serdica (A.D. 344)

Roman Catholics quote this council to establish Roman supremacy, as the council stated that if any bishops feels himself to be wrongly deposed, he should appeal to Rome. However, instead of supporting papal supremacy, this council shows that the papacy developed. If there had always been universal recognition of papal jurisdiction, why would a council need to give Rome the ability to be appealed to? Additionally, this only concerned certain situations where someone was unjustly deposed, the council did not give Rome

the power of universal jurisdiction and it was not an ecumenical council, as we will see later, the council was not accepted by the North African bishops.

Council of Carthage (A.D. 419)

The council of Carthage is large evidence against the claims of the modern papacy, as this council states: “especially since whosoever thinks himself wronged by any judgment may appeal to the council of his Province, or even to a General Council [i.e. of Africa] unless it be imagined that God can inspire a single individual with justice, and refuse it to an innumerable multitude of bishops (sacerdotum) assembled in council. And how shall we be able to rely on a sentence passed beyond the sea, since it will not be possible to send there the necessary witnesses, whether from the weakness of sex, or advanced age, or any other impediment?”

The North African bishops here clearly resisted Pope Zosimus, who quoted the council of Serdica as a Nicene canon accidentally to intervene in the deposing of Apiarius. The African bishops did not submit to his decision and instead wrote to him a letter, saying that he is not fit to make such decisions, and that a single man cannot overrule multiple bishops in a council.

First council of Ephesus (A.D. 431)

Catholic apologists often quote this council as supporting papal supremacy, stating: *“It is doubtful to none, nay it has*

been known to all ages, that holy and blessed Peter, the prince and head of the Apostles, the column of the Faith, the foundation of the Catholic Church, received from our Lord Jesus Christ, the Saviour and Redeemer of the human race, the keys of the Kingdom, and that to him was given the power of binding and loosing sins, who until this day and for ever lives and judges in his successors. His successor in order and his representative, our holy and most blessed Pope Celestine"

However, this does not prove papal supremacy. I do admit that there was a papal "primacy" but not supremacy, the pope was first among equals, had the highest honor and was looked to as the chief church, as I have already stated, in the same way as Constantinople is first in Orthodoxy.

Secondly this is not a canon of the council but the opinion of the papal legate Philip.

Second council of Ephesus (robber council) 449ad

The second council of Ephesus, despite having papal legates was not presided by the pope but instead by the bishop of Alexandria, which shows that the Alexandrian churches looked to their bishop as more important than the Roman bishop.

Though this point cannot be stressed too far, as the council affirmed Miaphysitism, which is a position outlawed by the council of Chalcedon.

Council of Chalcedon (A.D. 451)

Canon 28

Following in all things the decisions of the holy Fathers, and acknowledging the canon, which has been just read, of the One Hundred and Fifty Bishops beloved-of-God (who assembled in the imperial city of Constantinople, which is New Rome, in the time of the Emperor Theodosius of happy memory), we also do enact and decree the same things concerning the privileges of the most holy Church of Constantinople, which is New Rome. For the Fathers rightly granted privileges to the throne of old Rome, because it was the royal city. And the One Hundred and Fifty most religious Bishops, actuated by the same consideration, gave equal privileges (ἴσα πρεσβεῖα) to the most holy throne of New Rome, justly judging that the city which is honoured with the Sovereignty and the Senate, and enjoys equal privileges with the old imperial Rome, should in ecclesiastical matters also be magnified as she is, and rank next after her; so that, in the Pontic, the Asian, and the Thracian dioceses, the metropolitans only and such bishops also of the Dioceses aforesaid as are among the barbarians, should be ordained by the aforesaid most holy throne of the most holy Church of Constantinople; every metropolitan of the aforesaid dioceses, together with the bishops of his province, ordaining his own provincial bishops, as has been declared by the divine canons; but that, as has been above said, the metropolitans of the aforesaid Dioceses should be ordained by the archbishop of Constantinople, after the proper elections have been held according to custom and have been reported to him.

This canon is in clear contradiction to papal claims, the most important things that can be gathered are:

1. it claims that Rome was "granted" privileges, which highly implies that the council admitted to a development of power.

2. It says that the basis of Roman power is from being an imperial city, not because of Jesus giving that authority.

3. It says that Constantinople will have equal rights as Rome, this does not make any logical sense for two churches to both be infallible and have universal jurisdiction at once.

2nd Constantinople (A.D. 553)

This council again has hard evidence against the modern Catholic system, as the council specifically attacked the pope, the following was stated in the council: *"Yesterday Vigilius sent Servus Dei, a most reverend Subdeacon of the Roman Church, and invited Belisarius, Cethegus, as also Justinus and Constantine the most glorious consuls, as well as bishops Theodore, Ascidas, Benignus, and Phocas, to come to him as he wished to give through them an answer to the Emperor. They came, but speedily returned and informed the most pious lord, that we had visited Vigilius, the most religious bishop, and that he had said to us: We have called you for this reason, that you may know what things have been done in the past days. To this end I have written a document about the disputed Three Chapters, addressed to the most pious Emperor, pray be good enough to read it, and to carry it to his Serenity. But when we had heard this and had seen the document written to*

your serenity, we said to him that we could not by any means receive any document written to the most pious Emperor without his bidding. But you have deacons for running with messages, by whom you can send it. He, however, said to us: You now know that I have made the document. But we, bishops, answered him: If your blessedness is willing to meet together with us and the most holy Patriarchs, and the most religious bishops, and to treat of the Three Chapters and to give, in unison with us all, a suitable form of the orthodox faith, as the Holy Apostles and the holy Fathers and the four Councils have done, we will hold you as our head, as a father and primate. But if your holiness has drawn up a document for the Emperor, you have errand-runners, as we have said; send it by them. And when he had heard these things from us, he sent Servus Dei the Subdeacon, who now awaits the answer of your serenity. And when his Piety had heard this, he commanded through the aforesaid most religious and glorious men, the before-named subdeacon to carry back this message to the most religious Vigilius: We invited him (you) to meet together with the most blessed patriarchs and other religious bishops, and with them in common to examine and judge the Three Chapters. But since you have refused to do this, and you say that you alone have written by yourself somewhat on the Three Chapters; if you have condemned them, in accordance with those things which you did before, we have already many such statements and need no more; but if you have written now something contrary to these things which were done by you before, you have condemned yourself by your own writing, since you have departed from orthodox doctrine and

have defended impiety. And how can you expect us to receive such a document from you?"

I can hardly imagine a modern council saying such words against the pope, additionally the council later claimed to have higher authority than the pope by quoting verses such as Ecclesiastes: *"But also the Holy Fathers, who from time to time have met in the four holy councils, following the example of the ancients, have by a common discussion, disposed of by a fixed decree the heresies and questions which had sprung up, as it was certainly known, that by common discussion when the matter in dispute was presented by each side, the light of truth expels the darkness of falsehood. Nor is there any other way in which the truth can be made manifest when there are discussions concerning the faith, since each one needs the help of his neighbour, as we read in the Proverbs of Solomon: A brother helping his brother shall be exalted like a walled city; and he shall be strong as a well-founded kingdom; and again in Ecclesiastes he says: Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour. So also the Lord himself says: Verily I say unto you that if two of you shall agree upon earth as touching anything they shall seek for, they shall have it from my Father which is in heaven. For wheresoever two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."*

In fact, because the Roman bishop refused to accept the decisions of the council, he was put under arrest by the Byzantine emperor.

Quinisext council (A.D. 692)

The council attacked the Roman practice of clerical celibacy and despite being opposed by the pope, it gained acceptance among the eastern Churches. Another interesting thing is that the council states that the bishop of Constantinople should have equal power as the Roman bishop, which is a statement that does not make sense assuming universal jurisdiction.

Canon 36

Renewing the enactments by the 150 Fathers assembled at the God-protected and imperial city, and those of the 630 who met at Chalcedon; we decree that the see of Constantinople shall have equal privileges with the see of Old Rome, and shall be highly regarded in ecclesiastical matters as that is, and shall be second after it. After Constantinople shall be ranked the See of Alexandria, then that of Antioch, and afterwards the See of Jerusalem.

Canon 55

Since we understand that in the city of the Romans, in the holy fast of Lent they fast on the Saturdays, contrary to the ecclesiastical observance which is traditional, it seemed good to the holy synod that also in the Church of the Romans the canon shall immovably stands fast which says: If any cleric shall be found to fast on a Sunday or Saturday (except on one occasion only) he is to be deposed; and if he is a layman he shall be cut off.

Canon 13

Since we know it to be handed down as a rule of the Roman Church that those who are deemed worthy to be advanced to the diaconate or presbyterate should promise no longer to cohabit with their wives, we, preserving the ancient rule and apostolic perfection and order, will that the lawful marriages of men who are in holy orders be from this time forward firm, by no means dissolving their union with their wives nor depriving them of their mutual intercourse at a convenient time.

Third council of Constantinople (A.D. 680)

This council declared pope Honorius as anathema, condemning him for heresy:

And with these we define that there shall be expelled from the holy Church of God and anathematized Honorius who was some time Pope of Old Rome, because of what we found written by him to Sergius, that in all respects he followed his view and confirmed his impious doctrines. We have also examined the synodal letter of Sophronius of holy memory, some time Patriarch of the Holy City of Christ our God, Jerusalem, and have found it in accordance with the true faith and with the Apostolic teachings, and with those of the holy approved Fathers. Therefore we have received it as orthodox and as salutary to the holy Catholic and Apostolic Church, and have decreed that it is right that his name be inserted in the diptychs of the Holy Churches.

Council of Hieria (A.D. 754)

The council of Hieria decreed against the use of images despite the pope being in support of the use of images.

Fourth council of Constantinople (A.D.880)

There were two councils with the same name, the one accepted by Eastern Orthodoxy in 880 was in direct conflict with the pope, as when the pope got Photius deposed by the council of Constantinople in 870ad another council in 880ad reversed the decision.